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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2108
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0345

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 000959

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

DEPT ALSO FOR EUR/SE AND G/TIP

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SMIG](#) [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [GR](#)
SUBJECT: GREECE: JUNE TIP UPDATE

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SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED -- PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION: This is the first in what we intend to be regular updates on Greece's efforts to combat trafficking in persons (TIP). In June, Greek authorities in cooperation with Europol and officials from neighboring countries, broke up three trafficking rings and granted assistance and official victim status to a number of women and girls exploited by the rings. On June 2, governors of border provinces in Greece, Bulgaria, and Turkey met as part of their on-going discussions on trafficking issues and re-affirmed their commitment to support victims and strengthen measures against traffickers. A Greek and Bulgarian were arrested for running an agricultural labor trafficking operation in northern Greece. The European Women's Network (ENOW), Klimaka, and the Greek Council for Refugees -- all dynamic NGOs and official partners of the MFA in combating TIP -- complained about the adverse impact on their operations of delays in receiving funds from the Development Aid Division of the MFA. END SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION.

Bulgarian Women Freed in Peloponese

¶2. (SBU) On June 9, the Organized Crime section of the Hellenic Police busted a ring trafficking Bulgarian women in the southern Greek region of the Peloponese. The women allegedly were lured to Greece on the promise of decent jobs, but were held captive and forced into prostitution in local night clubs and bars, reportedly in collaboration with the owners of the establishments. The network was dismantled through the cooperation of the Greek police with Europol and Bulgarian police authorities. A Greek bar owner, three Bulgarians, and an Albanian citizen were arrested. Police confiscated 2,030 euro a BMW car, and a device for snorting cocaine. The ring was uncovered when one woman escaped and reported her ordeal to the police. The three women freed were terrified. They were examined by the Prosecutor, who gave them trafficking-victim status.

Romanian Trafficking Ring Dismantled

¶3. (SBU) On June 9, the Athens Police announced its breakup of a Romanian trafficking network operating in Greece and other countries. The ring allegedly recruited poor women in Romania on the promise of legal jobs in restaurants and as baby sitters. An underage victim of the gang who had been forced to work as a prostitute at various brothels in Athens, escaped and went to the police. The Police conducted an investigation and sting operation that resulted in the arrest of a Polish man and a Romanian woman and liberated two other women victims of the gang. The women were referred to the

shelter of the NGO European Women's Network in Athens. Police confiscated 2,000 euro in cash, bankbooks with deposits of 20,000 euro three counterfeit stamps of a local police station, and a large quantity of notes with telephone numbers of clients and dates. The suspects were brought before the Public Prosecutor on June 11, and the victims were given official recognition as such by the Prosecutor.

Albanian Charged with Abduction and Trafficking

¶4. (SBU) On June 30, a 22-year-old Albanian man was charged with abduction and forcing a 14-year-old female compatriot into prostitution. According police and NGO sources, the suspect first began a relationship with the underage girl last December and later kidnapped her, brought her to Greece, kept her captive, and forced her into prostitution in the Platomonas area in north-central Greece. After Platomonas he moved her to Porto Rafti near Athens, where the girl managed to escape and called the police for help. Police arrested the Albanian national. The victim was referred to the shelter of faith-based NGO Solidarity and received victim status by the Prosecutor.

Greek, Turkish, Bulgarian Governors Discuss TIP

¶5. (SBU) The governors of border provinces in Greece, Turkey, and Bulgaria met in Turkey June 2 to discuss human trafficking and trafficking in women. Turkish northwestern province of Edirne Governor Mustafa Buyuk hosted governors from Greece's Xanthi and Evros, as well as Bulgaria's Haskovo and Smolen, provinces. The governors issued a joint statement following the meeting in which they underscored their commitment to support victims of trafficking during

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extradition procedures, provide them psychological help, and reinforce security system in these countries. The meeting was within the framework of ongoing border cooperation between Greece, Turkey, and Bulgaria.

Two arrests for labor trafficking

¶6. (SBU) A Greek and a Bulgarian national were arrested in the north-central prefecture of Pieria in late June for forcing 11 Bulgarians, including an underage girl, to work as agricultural laborers. The victims, all from the same Bulgarian village, were lured across the border illegally with promises of jobs in tobacco farms for 50 euro a day. Upon arrival, the victims allegedly had their documents taken away and were forced to work in appalling conditions for 14 hours a day seven days a week without food and paid only 10 euro a day. The exploitation was revealed when one worker called a member of his family requesting her to deposit 600 euro in a bank in the name of the Greek owner of the farm in order to be allowed to leave. The victims were helped by volunteers of the European Women's Network, which paid for their hotel expenses for two days and helped with their repatriation to Bulgaria.

NGOs complain of delays in financing from YDAS

¶7. (SBU) The European Women's Network (ENOW), Klimaka, and the Greek Council for Refugees -- all dynamic NGOs and official partners of the MFA in combating trafficking in persons -- complained to us about delays in receiving funds from the Development Aid Division of the MFA. All three NGOs said cooperation with the Development Aid Division of the MFA was not regularized and, as a result, funds were made available only after very long delays. As a result, Klimaka was forced to close a trafficking victims, shelter in 2007. The NGO argued it could not keep up the shelter, which required regular and substantial resources and manpower to

operate. Nickie Roumbani, President of ENOW, alleged that the government shelter EKKA was also at minimal operation level due to delays in receiving committed funds. ENOW and other NGOs expressed admiration for police work but were very critical of other players in combating trafficking in human beings, such as the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We have raised with senior levels of the MFA the need for more regular and timely distribution of funds to these NGOs; we have been promised an update on this situation in the near future.

SPECKHARD